

# Bleeding Kansas: A Timeline



<b>1820</b>	The <b>Missouri Compromise</b> closed all territory north of the <b>36°30'</b> parallel to slavery within the Louisiana Purchase. The territories that would later be organized as Kansas and Nebraska were north of the 36°30' parallel, so the understanding reached in 1820 was that this territory would be closed to slavery.
<b>1850</b>	As part of the <b>Compromise of 1850</b> , the New Mexico and Utah Territories were both organized in the Mexican Cession on the principle of <b>popular sovereignty</b> , with Congress passing the settlement of the slavery question to the settlers, themselves.  California is admitted into the Union as a free state. This was the first <i>de facto</i> application of popular sovereignty because the settlers in California drafted and submitted a free-state constitution on their own, without having previously been organized as a federal territory.
<b>1854</b>	The <b>Kansas-Nebraska Act</b> , written by <b>Sen. Stephen Douglas</b> of Illinois, was aimed at developing Western lands in the Louisiana Purchase north of the 36°30' parallel (e.g., encouraging settlement, building a transcontinental railroad). It included a provision repealing the Missouri Compromise and organizing the Kansas and Nebraska Territories based on popular sovereignty.  The Kansas-Nebraska Act caused a national controversy, resulting in the <b>demise of the Whig Party</b> after its Northern and Southern factions split on the bill. Former Northern Whigs and free-soil Democrats met in Wisconsin and founded the <b>Republican Party</b> .
<b>1854-59</b>	Proslavery and antislavery settlers rushed into the Kansas Territory in order to try to create majorities for their respective sides. Some of the proslavery settlers were " <b>Border Ruffians</b> " who were residents of Missouri who crossed the border in order to influence elections. Antislavery settlers came from as far as New England. This resulted in violent confrontations that earned the Kansas Territory the nickname, " <b>Bleeding Kansas</b> ."  The New England settlers were supported by Northern abolitionists, such as <b>Henry Ward Beecher</b> , who sent rifles that became known as "Beecher's Bibles." Proslavery settlers were also armed and committed acts of violence, such as the <b>Sack of Lawrence</b> , an attack on the antislavery town of Lawrence, Kansas. <b>John Brown</b> , a New England abolitionist who settled in Kansas with his sons, took vengeance on a randomly-selected family of proslavery settlers in the <b>Pottawatomie Massacre</b> . The violence in Kansas continued for years, killing dozens.
<b>1855</b>	A convention of settlers was held in Topeka, Kansas, which produced the <b>Topeka Constitution</b> , which was a Free State constitution for Kansas. The Topeka Constitution was held up in Congress, not being able to pass through the proslavery Senate.
<b>1856</b>	<b>Charles Sumner</b> , an abolitionist senator from Massachusetts, delivered an inflammatory speech, which he titled, "The Crime Against Kansas," in which he personally insulted Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina and went on to disparage his entire state.  <b>Preston Brooks</b> , a member of the House of Representatives from South Carolina and a relative of Senator Butler, took it upon himself to beat the living daylights out of Sumner with a cane to avenge the honor of his state. The <b>caning of Charles Sumner</b> became a polarizing incident, as Northerners vilified Brooks as a caricature of a violent Southern slaveholder, while he was hailed as a hero in the South. Southern supporters sent canes to Brooks in appreciation for his efforts.
<b>1857</b>	Proslavery settlers drafted the <b>Lecompton Constitution</b> , which would have established Kansas as a slave state. In spite of support from President Buchanan, the Lecompton Constitution was blocked by the free-state majority in the House of Representatives.
<b>1861</b>	After the <b>secession</b> of the Deep South created a free-state majority in the United States Senate, Kansas was finally admitted into the Union as a free state on January 29, 1861.

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